Nº 87. SATURDAY, *September* 30, 1786.

—— Sed in longum tamen ævum
Manſerunt hodieque manent veſtigia ruris.
HOR.

THAT there is Nobody in town, is the obſervation of every perſon one has met for ſeveral weeks paſt; and though the word *Nobody*, like its fellow-vocable *Everybody*, has a great latitude of ſignification, and in this inſtance means upwards of threeſcore thouſand people, yet undoubtedly, in a certain rank of life, one finds, at this ſeaſon, a very great blank in one's accuſtomed ſociety. He whom circumſtances oblige to remain in town, feels a ſort of impriſonment, from which his more fortunate acquaintance have eſcaped to purer air, to freſher breezes, and a clearer ſky. He ſees, with a very melancholy aſpect, the cloſe window-ſhutters of deſerted houſes, the ruſted knockers, and moſſy pavement of unfrequented ſquares, and the few diſtant ſcattered figures of empty walks; while he fancies, in the country, the joyouſneſs of the reapers, and the ſhout

of

of the ſportſman enlivening the fields; and with-in doors, the hours made jocund by the feſtivity of aſſembled friends, the frolic, the dance, and the ſong.

Though the prevailing incidents of my latter part of life have fixed it almoſt conſtantly to a town, yet nobody is more enthuſiaſtically fond of the country than I; and amidſt all my baniſhment from it, I have contrived ſtill to preſerve a reliſh for its pleaſures, and an enjoyment of its ſports, which few who viſit it ſo ſeldom are able to retain. I can ſtill weave an angling-line, or dreſs a fly, am at leaſt a hit-and-miſs man a-ſhooting, and have not forgotten the tune of a *View-Holla*, or the encouraging *Hark forward!* to a cautious hound. But tho' theſe are a ſet of capacities which mark one's denizenſhip to the country, and which therefore I am proud to retain, yet I confeſs I am more delighted with its quieter and leſs turbulent pleaſures. There is a ſort of moral uſe of the country which every man who has not loſt the rural ſentiment will feel; a certain purity of mind and imagination which its ſcenes inſpire, a ſimplicity, a colouring of nature on the objects around us, which correct the artifice and intereſtedneſs of the world. There is in the country a penſive vacancy (if the expreſſion may be allowed me) of mind, which ſtills the violence of

of paſſion, and the tumult of deſire. One can hardly dream on the bank of ſome nameleſs brook, without waking a better and a wiſer man. I early took the liberty of boaſting to my readers, that as a *Lounger*, I had learned to be idle without guilt, and indolent without indifference. In the country, methinks, I find this diſpoſition congenial to the place; the air which breathes around me, like that which touches the *Eolian harp*, ſteals on my ſoul a tender but varied tone of feeling, that lulls while it elevates, that ſoothes while it inſpires. Not a blade that whiſtles in the breeze, not a weed that ſpreads its ſpeckled leaves to the ſun, but may add ſomething to the ideas of him who can lounge with all his mind open about him.

I am not ſure if, in the regret which I feel for my abſence from the country, I do not rate its enjoyments higher, and paint its landſcapes in more glowing colours, than the reality might afford. I have long cultivated a talent very fortunate for a man of my diſpoſition, that of travelling in my eaſy-chair, of tranſporting myſelf, without ſtirring from my parlour, to diſtant places and to abſent friends, of drawing ſcenes in my mind's eye, and of peopling them with the groups of fancy, or the ſociety of remembrance. When I have ſometimes lately felt the drearineſs of the town, deſerted by my acquaintance; when

when I have returned from the coffeehouſe where the boxes were unoccupied, and ſtrolled out from my accuſtomed walk, which even the lame beggar had left; I was fain to ſhut myſelf up in my room, order a diſh of my beſt tea (for there is a ſort of melancholy which diſpoſes one to make much of one's ſelf), and calling up the powers of memory and imagination, leave the ſolitary town for a ſolitude more intereſting, which my younger days enjoyed in the country, which I think, and if I am wrong I do not wiſh to be undeceived, was the moſt elyſian ſpot in the world.

'Twas at an old Lady's, a relation and godmother of mine, where a particular incident occaſioned my being left during the vacation of two ſucceſſive ſeaſons. Her houſe was formed out of the remains of an old Gothic caſtle, of which one tower was ſtill almoſt entire; it was tenanted by kindly daws and ſwallows. Beneath, in a modernized part of the building, reſided the miſtreſs of the manſion. The houſe was ſkirted with a few majeſtic elms and beeches, and the ſtumps of ſeveral others ſhewed that they had once been more numerous. To the weſt a clump of firs covered a rugged rocky dell, where the rooks claimed a preſcriptive ſeignory. Through this a daſhing rivulet forced its way, which afterwards grew quiet in its progreſs;

progreſs; and gurgling gently through a piece of downy meadow-ground, croſſed the bottom of the garden, where a little ruſtic paling incloſed a waſhing-green, and a wicker-ſeat fronting the ſouth was placed for the accommodation of the old Lady, whoſe leſſer tour, when her fields did not require a viſit, uſed to terminate in this ſpot. Here, too, were ranged the hives for her bees, whoſe hum, in a ſtill, warm ſunſhine, ſoothed the good old Lady's indolence, while their proverbial induſtry was ſometimes quoted for the inſtruction of her waſhers. The brook ran brawling through ſome underwood on the outſide of the garden, and ſoon after formed a little caſcade, which fell into the river that winded through a valley in front of the houſe. When hay-making or harveſt was going on, my godmother took her long ſtick in her hand, and overlooked the labours of the mowers or reapers; though I believe there was little thrift in the ſuperintendency, as the viſit generally coſt her a draught of beer or a dram, to encourage their diligence.

Within doors ſhe had ſo able an aſſiſtant, that her labour was little. In that department an old man-ſervant was her miniſter, the father of my *Peter*, who ſerves me not the leſs faithfully that we have gathered nuts together in my godmother's hazel bank. This old butler (I call

(I call him by his title of honour, though in truth he had many ſubordinate offices) had originally enliſted with her huſband, who went into the army a youth, though he afterwards married and became a country gentleman, had been his ſervant abroad, and attended him during his laſt illneſs at home. His beſt hat, which he wore a-Sundays, with a ſcarlet waiſtcoat of his maſter's, had ſtill a cockade in it.

Her huſband's books were in a room at the top of a ſcrew ſtair-caſe, which had ſcarce been opened ſince his death; but her own library for Sabbath or rainy days, was ranged in a little book-preſs in the parlour. It conſiſted, as far as I can remember, of ſeveral volumes of ſermons, a Concordance, *Thomas a'Kempis*, Antoninus's Meditations, the Works of the Author of the *Whole Duty of Man*, and a tranſlation of *Boethius*; the original editions of the *Spectator* and *Guardian*, *Cowley*'s Poems, *Dryden*'s Works, (of which I had loſt a volume ſoon after I firſt came about her houſe), *Baker*'s Chronicle, *Burnet*'s Hiſtory of his own Times, *Lamb*'s Royal Cookery, *Abercromby*'s Scots Warriors, and *Niſbet*'s Heraldry.

The ſubject of the laſt-mentioned book was my godmother's ſtrong ground; and ſhe could diſentangle a point of genealogy beyond any body I ever knew. She had an excellent memory

mory for anecdote; and her stories, though ſometimes long, were never tireſome; for ſhe had been a woman of great beauty and accompliſhment in her youth, and had kept ſuch company as made the drama of her ſtories reſpectable and intereſting. She ſpoke frequently of ſuch of her own family as ſhe remembered when a child, but ſcarcely ever of thoſe ſhe had loſt, though one could ſee ſhe thought of them often. She had buried a beloved huſband and four children. Her youngeſt, Edward, "her "beautiful, her brave," fell in Flanders, and was not entombed with his anceſtors. His picture, done when a child, an artleſs red and white portrait, ſmelling at a noſegay, but very like withal, hung at her bedſide, and his ſword and gorget were croſſed under it. When ſhe ſpoke of a ſoldier, it was in a ſtyle above her uſual ſimplicity; there was a ſort of ſwell in her language, which ſometimes a tear (for her age had not loſt the privilege of tears) made ſtill more eloquent. She kept her ſorrows, like the devotions that ſolaced them, ſacred to herſelf. They threw nothing of gloom over her deportment; a gentle ſhade only, like the fleckered clouds of ſummer, that increaſe, not diminiſh, the benignity of the ſeaſon.

She had few neighbours, and ſtill fewer viſitors; but her reception of ſuch as did viſit her

was cordial in the extreme. She preſſed a little too much perhaps; but there was ſo much heart and good-will in her importunity, as made her good things ſeem better than thoſe of any other table. Nor was her attention confined only to the good fare of her gueſts, tho' it might have flattered her vanity more than that of moſt exhibitors of good dinners, becauſe the cookery was generally directed by herſelf. Their ſervants lived as well in her hall, and their horſes in her ſtable. She looked after the airing of their ſheets, and ſaw their fires mended if the night was cold. Her old butler, who roſe betimes, would never ſuffer any body to mount his horſe faſting.

The parſon of the pariſh was her gueſt every Sunday, and ſaid prayers in the evening. To ſay truth, he was no great genius, nor much a ſcholar. I believe my godmother knew rather more of divinity than he did; but ſhe received from him information of another ſort; he told her who were the poor, the ſick, the dying of the pariſh, and ſhe had ſome aſſiſtance, ſome comfort for them all.

I could draw the old lady at this moment!—dreſſed in grey, with a clean white hood nicely plaited (for ſhe was ſomewhat finical about the neatneſs of her perſon), ſitting in her ſtraight-backed elbow-chair, which ſtood in a large window

dow ſcooped out of the thickneſs of the ancient wall. The middle panes of the window were of painted glaſs, the ſtory of Joſeph and his brethren. On the outſide waved a honeyſuckle-tree, which often threw its ſhade acroſs her book, or her work; but ſhe would not allow it to be cut down. "It has ſtood there many a "day," ſaid ſhe, "and we old inhabitants "ſhould bear with one another." Methinks I ſee her thus ſeated, her ſpectacles on, but raiſed a little on her brow for a pauſe of explanation, their ſhagreen-caſe laid between the leaves of a ſilver-claſped family-bible.—On one ſide, her bell and ſnuff-box; on the other, her knitting apparatus in a blue damaſk bag.—Between her and the fire an old Spaniſh pointer, that had formerly been her ſon Edward's, teaſed, but not teaſed out of his gravity, by a little terrier of mine.—All this is before me, and I am a hundred miles from town, its inhabitants, and its buſineſs. In town I may have ſeen ſuch a figure; but the country ſcenery around, like the taſteful frame of an excellent picture, gives it a heightening, a relief, which it would loſe in any other ſituation.

Some of my readers, perhaps, will look with little reliſh on the portrait. I know it is an egotiſm in me to talk of its value; but over this diſh of tea, and in ſuch a temper of mind, one

is given to egotism. It will be only adding another to say, that when I recall the rural scene of the good old Lady's abode, her simple, her innocent, her useful employments, the afflictions she sustained in this world, the comforts she drew from another; I feel a serenity of soul, a benignity of affections, which I am sure confer happiness, and I think must promote virtue.

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